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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, S/E NATSIOS, DRL,
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: WISE WORDS FROM FREED OPPOSITION LEADER MUBARAK
AL-FADIL

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a wide-ranging meeting with CDA Fernandez on December 17, Umma Renewal and Reform leader Mubarak al-Fadil al-Mahdi urged the US to encourage widening the CPA to include parties other than the NCP and SPLM. Al-Fadil described President Bashir as essentially a 'fall guy' for the figures actually making decisions in Khartoum. His recent prison experience had exposed the weaknesses of Khartoum's security apparatus, he said. Al-Fadil advocated for an SPLM-northern alliance as well as the international community (chiefly the US) giving the government, and Bashir, an ultimatum: the accommodating Muamar Qaddafi model or the isolating Saddam Hussein model. End summary.

SALAH GHOSH BEHIND AL-FADIL'S DETENTION

¶2. (C) Detailing his recent imprisonment, al-Fadil said that he'd always been politically active in opposing past Sudanese dictatorships, "but this time I didn't do anything!" He recounted being blindfolded at an interrogation center south of the airport in Khartoum while a juvenile account of his supposed plot to overthrow the government was read aloud to him. Why would he write anything like that? he asked his interrogators; the alleged statement didn't include anything about Darfur, democratization, economic problems, the CPA or any of his party's critical issues. Al-Fadil said that his interrogators accused him of trying to "market" his plan to Egypt, Libya and the United States. "I told them that US policy was based on change occurring through the CPA, not a coup," he told CDA. A coup depended on the element of surprise and the cooperation of the military, not on a group of retired officers who were "too old to overturn a car, much less a government."

¶3. (C) Intelligence chief Salah Ghosh was the driving force behind his prolonged imprisonment, al-Fadil said, because Ghosh wanted to prove his zeal to his NCP masters. The government's legal council had advised Ghosh to drop the matter, but he had refused. According to al-Fadil, Ghosh wanted to keep the case active in order to avoid being transferred to the Ministry of Interior. There had been talk of a coup by an ex-officer named Hasan al-Basha, al-Fadil said, but his plans were solely in the realm of fantasy -- he had no weapons or fighters. The government seized on this to distract attention from its problems in Darfur, he said, essentially creating something out of nothing. When CDA asked if he thought the other detainees would be released, al-Fadil was not optimistic. Some would be acquitted and others indicted, he assumed. The judge assigned to the case, Mutasim Taj al-Sir, was the same judge who had ordered the group be held in detention during the investigation, he was a creature

of the intelligence service. There was no independent evidence and only confessions extracted under torture, but the security apparatus would insist that the trial proceed, al-Fadil predicted.

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CENTRAL SECURITY APPARATUS WEAK, POORLY TRAINED
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14. (C) Al-Fadil said that his experience in prison had proven the inefficiency and unprofessionalism of the security forces. Why interrogate someone blindfolded, he wondered, so that you couldn't see their facial reactions when they responded? Chuckling, he said that he learned where he was being held when he overheard a soldier making a rendezvous appointment with his girlfriend, telling her the where nearest bus station was. In Nimeiri's time, political detainees weren't surrounded by guards and given such an exaggerated security profile, he said. Al-Fadil also noted a lack of trust among the security forces. His guards were rotated every three hours, always in pairs so as to keep an eye on each other. They had no job loyalty, he charged, but only wanted the salary. There was no fighting spirit or resolve among the security forces, he said; even diehard Islamists from the forces had privately told him that Sudanese political leaders from all parties needed to "sit down together and work things out before it was too late." CDA concurred, noting that while the NCP was relatively strong in some ways (access to money, intelligence and control over much of the media), it was very weak in others. After 18 years, there was no agenda other than remaining in power.

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SPLM AND NORTHERN OPPOSITION: STRENGTH IN UNITY
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15. (C) Describing his future plans, al-Fadil told CDA that his goals were Umma party reunification and achieving some kind of national political consensus. Just before his arrest, he said, he and GoSS president Salva Kiir had agreed to bring northern political opposition leaders to a workshop in Juba. The workshop would help allay any fears the SPLM had about northern antipathy towards the CPA and provide a starting point for formulating a common position on Darfur and political transformation. The end goal was to be a "Juba Declaration," signed by figures such as Kiir, Sadiq al-Mahdi, Hassan al-Turabi and himself. NCP "doves" would also be invited, al-Fadil said. When CDA asked what the US could do to support such an initiative, al-Fadil suggested that the US encourage groups in the north to align with the SPLM and the SPLM not to be so distrustful of Northerner Sudanese. The U.S. could also offer proposals for CPA/political transformation. The CPA needed to be much broader, al-Fadil said, and not be the property of only two parties. The SPLM had accomplished much but was politically weak and needed the skills and backing of more established northern opposition figures to confront a malevolent NCP. The death of John Garang had left a vacuum, he pointed out, but the SPLM was "afraid" of working with northern parties with Salva Kiir nervous about being cheated by tricky politicians from Khartoum. IGAD partners could be included, he suggested later in the conversation, even though the NCP "wants to eat its cake alone."

16. (C) CDA agreed with the need to "nationalize" a political strategy, telling al-Fadil that such larger issues as the elections and democracy had been overshadowed by the CPA, which in turn had been overshadowed by Darfur. Al-Fadil said that he had warned the SPLM to be wary of the NCP, who were expert game-players; the SPLM had allowed presidential advisor Nafie Ali Nafie to personally choose the fourteen percent opposition representation as mandated by the CPA. The current reconciliation between the NCP and SPLM would not

hold, he thought, since "make or break" issues such as Abyei and the oil fields were at stake. The NCP would never share USD 600 million in annual oil revenues, he asserted, especially as it was already borrowing from the oil companies and in debt to the Central Bank, "and even still it cannot pay all its expenses and bribes needed to stay afloat".

BASHIR A WEAK LEADER, DEPENDENT ON INNER CIRCLE

17. (C) The NCP was wreaking havoc in Darfur, al-Fadil said, even though it probably hadn't meant things to go so far. CDA agreed, noting that the government had created the conditions prevalent in Darfur, but that their creation had now turned against them. The janjaweed would retaliate, al-Fadil said, and the rebel movements were no more than tribal protest groups, not political entities. Al-Fadil suggested that the international community should back a strong security force in Darfur, then a multi-party conference on reconciliation and native administration, and only then address the issues of compensation and political representation in Khartoum. CDA cautioned al-Fadil that the NCP would reject such a strategy, noting its fear of any strong international force in Darfur and of other political parties using Darfur for partisan advantage since the NCP is so hated in Darfur.

18. (C) The ruling triumvirate in Khartoum was composed of VP Ali Osman Taha, party leader Nafie Ali Nafie and Awad al-Jaz (Minister of Energy - who controls the oil wealth), al-Fadil said (though perhaps intelligence chief Ghosh was also a contender). President Bashir was "passive, apolitical and lazy," he doesn't like to read memos and is interested only in delegating. He was actually more reasonable than the triumvirate committing crimes in his name. CDA concurred, saying that a strategy Washington could look at was to separate Bashir from those around him who were actively engaged in perpetuating crises in the country. Al-Fadil suggested telling Bashir that he had two choices: the international community would come after him personally, or he should find a resolution in Darfur and democratization. There were two scenarios, al-Fadil said -- the "Qaddafi" option or the "Saddam Hussein" option. Al-Fadil said he'd told General al-Hadi (chief NCP-janjaweed liaison and subject of ICC inquiry) this in 2004, only to then be fired from his government position by Taha when he traveled to the US. "I told Bashir that when I travel people ask me, 'Who runs your country, Ali or Bashir?' and it's embarrassing," al-Fadil

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said. The National Islamic Front was also feeling alienated by hardliners in the NCP, he added. The NCP was tactically brilliant but strategically disastrous, CDA said; "we tell them that you have 4-6 months to fix things, that this is a rare opportunity to correct your mistakes and future administrations may not be so forgiving."

19. (C) Comment: An informed, experienced interlocutor and long-time player in Sudan's political arena, al-Fadil's analysis of Bashir's weak leadership style rings true, and is in line with post's previous reporting. An SPLM-northern opposition alliance would be a natural fit, though extremely unpalatable to the National Congress Party; al-Fadil and his co-detainees were arrested as much to discourage any party unification or alliance-building as to provide cover for Salah Ghosh. Al-Fadil has expressed a desire to make a return trip to the US to build on his 2004 visit, which post would strongly support (possibly some time next year). End comment.

FERNANDEZ